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ENQUIRY

INTO THE

LEGALITY AND EXPEDIENCY

OF INCREASING THE

ROYAL NAVY

BY SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR BUILDING

COUNTY SHIPS.

Being the Correſpondence on that Subject between

ARTHUR YOUNG & CAPEL LOFFT, Eſqrs.

WITH A LIST OF THE

SUBSCRIBERS to the SUFFOLK MAN OF WAR.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

OBSERVATIONS ON THE STATE OF THE TAXES AND RESOURCES OF THE KINGDOM ON THE CONCLUSION OF THE

PEACE.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE meaſure of building ſhips, or raiſing men for the ſervice of the navy, by voluntary ſubſcription, which originated in Suffolk, has been canvaſſed with great warmth in various parts of the kingdom. In ſome places objections have ariſen, not only on the ſcore of expediency, but on that of legality; in others it has been made a matter of party; but in all it is the ſubject of very general converſation, which makes the Editor of the Bury Poſt, in which this correſpondence originally appeared, conclude that letters, which have been read in Suffolk with ſo much avidity, can ſcarcely fail of meeting attention in other parts of the kingdom, where this very important queſtion makes any impreſſion on the minds of men.

THE QUESTION DEBATED, &c.

To the EDITOR of the BURY POST.

SIR,

THE meaſure now carrying into execution in this county bears, in its firſt bluſh, ſo full a conviction of its utility, that a perſon who had not been a witneſs to the coldneſs of ſome of its friends, and the objections raiſed by its enemies, would not eaſily be led to imagine that it could fail of meeting univerſal approbation.—Yet ſorry I am to ſay, that in the little circle I move in, it is but too common to hear the propriety of it queſtioned; very much, if not ſolely, owing to ſome perſons of great for-

tune in the county, not ſubſcribing the ſmalleſt aſſiſtance to a meaſure ſo truly national. Struck at ſo uncommon a ſpectacle, it has made men inquiſitive in finding out reaſons for ſuch a conduct, which, once propagated, have been quoted by others as apologies for differing in opinion with the moſt reſpectable perſons in the county. Let us, Sir, with all the decency due to men of conſideration in their country, and with all the coolneſs that becomes a good cauſe, enquire into every poſſible motive that can influence an opinion ſo contrary to the common feelings of mankind. The following are the only reaſons I have heard againſt the meaſure that demand the ſmalleſt attention:—

I. *It is ſaid, that after the exorbitant taxes forced upon individuals to carry on an unſucceſsful war, it is unreaſonable to expect any voluntary taxation.*

This is an aſſertion that has not even a plauſible foundation, for it ſuppoſes that the friends of the ſcheme conſider the taxes already paid as too ſmall, and promote this meaſure as an addition: but the very contrary is the fact; for it is becauſe taxes have been ſo great, and yet ſo unavailing, that a voluntary contribution is ſet on foot. Our enemies

enemies have been perſuaded, that we are an exhauſted, as well as a divided people: that impreſſion tends to multiply and to perpetuate our burthens. Give them ſome convincing proofs to the contrary. Tell them that one noble ſpirit animates every Britiſh boſom. In the very moment of our imaginary ruin hold forth this diſplay of wealth —of our determined ſpirit to reſiſt their boundleſs ambition—and of our firm conviction, that the ſureſt path to peace is a vigorous preparation for war. In this only rational view our former taxes are but proofs of the expediency of the meaſure—of the neceſſity of preventing an increaſe of them, by the only conduct likely to command a peace.

II. *It is ſaid, that the addition of one ſhip, is an object too trifling to urge individuals to a ſubſcription.*

An act of parliament to force ſuch a meaſure on the whole kingdom would be no trifling object; it would be an efficient one. But it would be a tax—and a tax ſpeaks the neceſſity of a ſtate, but not the ſpirit of the people who pay it. A tax alſo is very expenſive to raiſe, and ſuffers great defalcation before the produce is expended on any object; whereas every penny given to a ſub-

ſcription goes immediately to the purpoſe for which it is raiſed. If the war is to be ſupported only by taxes, France will ſtill look for the period of their failure. Shew that the people of this kingdom feel the urgency of their ſituation; and are determined to *ſeek* the poſt of honour, not *wait* for it. Prove that to our enemies, and the impreſſion will be worth an hundred taxes. How is the exertion of ſuch a ſpirit to be made? Some county muſt begin. One ſhip is indeed a trifle; but an example pregnant with that exertion and enterprize will not be thought a trifle by the cabinet of Verſailles.

III. *That building a ſhip in a dock where government would build one without us, will be adding nothing to the national force.*

Admitted: And if the queſtion was to be debated in reference to this county ſingly, the objection would be ſomething. But what is the SPIRIT of the meaſure? To convince the legiſlature that the people have determined to regain the dominion of the ſea:—feeling its neceſſity even to their exiſtence, they will voluntarily pay to a meaſure that ſecures their ſafety. If the example is followed, and it becomes the voice of England, the executive power muſt take new

new meaſures to make it effective; and whether it is by new docks—new regulations in old ones—or by building in foreign countries—whether a new naval militia be eſtabliſhed, or our moſt burthenſome land one be ſent to ſea—if the thing is done the whole community will reap the benefit, and have reaſon to rejoice at the liberal example ſet by this county.

IV. *Some inſinuations, rather than aſſertions, have been made, that it is a meaſure of party; that if the old miniſtry had continued, it never would have been propoſed; and that now it is to pleaſe miniſters.*

Such a propoſition could, perhaps, never have been made at a moment that ſo completely refuted this idea, as the preſent. To enter into any diſquiſition on the merit of the old, late, or preſent miniſtries, would be entirely beſide the queſtion; ſince one may fairly aſſert the impoſſibility of gueſſing who is to be the miniſter of marine, or what party is to be at the head of affairs when the ſhip ſhall be launched; but this every man may ſafely aſſert, that let who will be miniſter, the navy of England ought to be increaſed—the ſpirit of the people ought to exert itſelf---and the Houſe of Bourbon ought to have reaſon to doubt their ſpeculation,

tion, that the reſources and ſoul of this country are no more. To do this is no buſineſs of party; to effect it calls for the united efforts of a great, miſrepreſented, but not exhauſted, people. He who contributes his mite to ſuch a deſign gives to the greatneſs and glory of his country---but takes from no party---tarniſhes the laurels of no ſtateſman, in, or out of office; and burns incenſe on no other altar but that of the ſafety, welfare, and happineſs of the people.

If then, Sir, there is ſo little reaſon in the objections to this meaſure, why is not the ſubſcription univerſal? I will venture to ſay that it will be ſo. It muſt be an error to aſſert, that becauſe certain perſons have not ſubſcribed, that *therefore* they will not do it. On the contrary, I am ſatisfied, that they have hitherto declined it for want of leiſure to conſider the object in all its lights, and that when they give their attention to it, it will meet with their concurrence.

One motive I muſt urge to every man that has not hitherto ſupported the ſtep: perhaps it has not met their approbation; they may think it would have been better omitted; but now that the attempt is begun, and even far advanced, where can exiſt the man that does not wiſh it may ſucceed! Is it poſſible that any friend to his country can think, without

without the deepeſt concern, of the triumph at Verſailles and Madrid on a great and opulent county making this attempt and failing! The majority of it greatly and nobly exerting themſelves, and all for proving to thoſe haughty enemies, that the ſpirit which once animated this kingdom is fled; that misfortune has cruſhed our faculties; and that French patriotiſm is warmer in its efforts, and ſteadier in its purſuits, than all the boaſted freedom of this once great and glorious Iſle! No, Sir; there is no ſuch man; or if there is, he lives not under the name of an Engliſhman: he is no inhabitant of Suffolk.

If we were told of a great province of France that had ſet ſuch a ſcheme on foot, and dropped it, for want either of ſpirit or ability, could we have better news? Or any more likely to animate us under the burthens of the war? But we ſhall have no ſuch intelligence. Neither let ſo fatal an information be carried from hence to France.

If the objections to the meaſure are weak, and yet the ſucceſs of it not very rapid, why is the pulpit ſilent on a ſubject moſt peculiarly fitted to it? Is not patriotiſm---a readineſs of exertion in favour of that ſociety that guards our property and protects our perſons---a willingneſs to ſacrifice a ſmall portion of luxurious comfort, and contemptible

temptible pleaſure, to uſes more neceſſary, and of greater nerve?—Is not this a ſubject as worthy the attention of men whoſe learning and eloquence enable them to illuſtrate it, as any of the obſcurer doctrines ſo much cultivated there?

One word, Sir, on the ſums ſubſcribed, and I have done. Too much cannot be ſaid in praiſe of thoſe perſons, who not only ſet this plan on foot, but ſupported it by great ſubſcriptions—but if it fails, which I am not willing for a moment to ſuppoſe, it will be owing to thoſe ſums being miſconceived. If a man gives two, three, or four ſhillings in the pound of his landed property he does nobly, but it is no more a reflection on another who gives but one ſhilling, than the Duke of Rutland's magnificent ſubſcription of a year's rental, is a requiſition to others to give the ſame; nor ſhould any man in converſation exalt the one by depreſſing the other. Such reflections would be injurious to the deſign, by depriving it of its freedom. Let it be eſteemed a general feeling —a harmony of virtue, like the valour of the antient Germans calling to battle, *Nec tam vocis ille quàm virtutis concentus videtur:*—an electric ſpark of patriotiſm, that darts the hidden fire, in a moment from one extremity of the county to the other. 'Tis the univerſal emotion that can alone dignify the

the meaſure; and for myſelf, I muſt own, I had rather have ſeen the whole 30,000 l. raiſed by ſmall ſums, than that a great one ſhould have appeared in the liſt, becauſe it would have been a conviction to our enemies, that it was an impulſe that touched EVERY BOSOM.

A few inſulated great men, with a train of their dependants, form the picture of a French ſubſcription. Let us, by the univerſal vigour of the preſent, prove that the great alone, can in this country do nothing. They have ſubſcribed to the preſent meaſure—and in truth, nobly. If, however, it reſts there, the whole falls. But if the ſpring of univerſal opinion floats the doubtful cauſe to the ſurface, from that moment it will flouriſh, and ſhew to the world, what it is that ſanctifies the efforts of a generous people—Liberty.

Let therefore each man ſubſcribe ſomething; and though he cannot riſe into the higher claſſes of liberality, ſtill let him unite in the great intention of the plan, and, by appearing in the liſt, ſhew that in this alarming criſis he more than vaguely wiſhes well to his country. We are now doubly called upon, for if this ſcheme ſhould die in theſe early moments of its exiſtence, we can little expect it to be followed, and then the

very effort to eſtabliſh a reſource for ourſelves, will prove the ſureſt means of inſpiring with freſh vigour the hoſt of foes with which we are ſurrounded.

I am, &c.

A. Y.

September 12, 1782.

To

To the EDITOR of the BURY POST.

SIR,

A Letter has appeared in your entertaining and uſeful paper of laſt week, under the ſignature of A. Y. relative to the plan of ſubſcription for building a ſhip. If perſuaſive and animated language, with the ſtrongeſt arguments of which the ſubject appears capable, can prevail in favour of the deſign, your correſpondent is victorious: but I flatter myſelf, from his mode of arguing, and the ſentiments contained in his elegant addreſs to the public, that if ſtronger arguments are on the contrary ſide, he will, not reluctantly, ſubmit to their force.

He has arranged four objections as the only reaſons againſt the meaſure that can demand the ſmalleſt attention. To me they ſeem neither the ſole nor the moſt cogent reaſons. After explaining my idea of them, I ſhall beg leave to offer ſuch as have been, or might be urged.

The fourth I ſhall take firſt, as I only mention it in order to lay it aſide. I do not therefore quote it in terms; but con-

tent myſelf with taking notice, that the ſuggeſtion of its being a party ſcheme, ſet on foot to pleaſe the preſent miniſtry has no weight with me; under whatever miniſtry it had been propoſed, by whatever party recommended, my notions with regard to it would have been the ſame; and therefore I can ſee no cauſe for ſo much relying on the topic of authority, derived from the reſpectable names by which the liſt is diſtinguiſhed. Names there may be ſeen in it of men whoſe underſtanding I reſpect, whoſe principles I revere, and whoſe motive, upon this and other occaſions, I ſincerely believe to have been a generous zeal for the public good. To the candour of ſuch I can addreſs myſelf with confidence, but that very candour will anticipate the objection againſt ſubſtituting the influence of their names in the place of reaſon. If the ſcheme be of manifeſt and general utility, it requires no recommendation but that of its intrinſic merit; if otherwiſe, the rank, conſequence, or character of its patrons are no argument to the public.

The other three reaſons are at leaſt not foreign to the queſtion: That after the exorbitant taxes to carry on any unſucceſsful war, voluntary taxation is not to be expected:—That building a ſhip where government will build one without us is adding

ing nothing to the national force;—That the addition of one ſhip is an object too trifling to urge individuals to a ſubſcription. Theſe are ſtated to be refuted with triumph; and the principal ſtreſs is laid, not on the naval ſtrength to be thus acquired, but on the *ſpirit* which a voluntary ſubſcription is to ſhew. The moſt generally convenient, the moſt effectual, the moſt conſtitutional method of raiſing ſupplies is ſurely the moſt truly ſpirited. A method which will pervade the nation, and not preſs on a particular county, while it exempts the reſt; a method which can unite the common force under the direction of the national wiſdom; a method founded on the right of the collective body of the people of England, to determine in their great council, the parliament, for what purpoſe, to what amount, and under what regulations ſupplies ſhall be given and granted. Our corrupt, defective, nominal repreſentation, furniſhes the idea of oppoſing a tax to a ſubſcription. On the true conſtitutional principle, it is the *free aid of the people* given to government, and limited to the ſpecial ſervice of the nation. A ſubſcription of individuals, or of a county, could it be in the moſt perfect ſenſe voluntary, with regard to the ſubſcribers, is of a different complexion with reſpect to the community at large; to which the object

ject or the means may appear exceptionable. And ſhall we add a new ſpecies of inequality and confuſion to the preſent diſorder of our conſtitutional ſyſtem? Shall we ſhew our ſpirit by raiſing limited and partial aids to government, rather than by joining in petition for parliamentary reform; by which juſtice and policy in the end propoſed, economy and efficacy in the grant and application of aids, would be ſecured; and the common defence would be the common care? Do we mean to ſhew that we are not an exhauſted people; and is this to be effected by an abandonment of all the conſtitutional reſources? If we had no reſource but deſpair it might apologize for ſuch a meaſure; but if we have no inteſtine war; no invaſion; if we have the fortitude which can look danger in the face without terror or raſhneſs; if we have that diſcretion which allows us to weigh evils and their propoſed remedies, let us not borrow the reſorts of deſpotic governments. If we have a legiſlature which we can truſt, let its office be not invaded; if our preſent legiſlature reſt upon a baſis too narrow and arbitrary for our conſtitutional confidence, we alike deprive war of rational hope, and peace of ſecurity, if we ſuffer the redreſs of ſuch a grievance to be poſtponed! If the war has been unſucceſsful, notwithſtanding

ſtanding the ſinews of the nation have been ſtrained, it will become us to be at laſt convinced there is ſomething in the nature and principle of it, to which ſucceſs is forbidden by earth and heaven; and inſtead of expecting to command a peace by efforts ſo diſproportioned to the object, not a moment ſhould be loſt in heſitating whether we ſhall at length take the plain road of juſtice. We cannot dictate peace by a ſhew of preparation for war, which would prove our neceſſities and weakneſs, not our vigour; but prudence and moderation, and proof of our ſincerity, will be the moſt probable means of enſuring peace.

Let us now ſee whether there be not other reaſons againſt ſubſcribing entitled to ſome attention, beſides thoſe enumerated in the letter. I ſhould hope there are, to the conviction of a reflecting mind; and that in part they have appeared in the courſe of this letter. They are principally, as it ſeems to me, the following:

That the method of ſubſcription is too ſlow, precarious, and at beſt limited in its effect, to anſwer any purpoſe at which it can be ſuppoſed to aim.

That whatever juſt and practicable deſign we can have in view, for which ſupplies ſhould be raiſed, may be far more ſpeedily, conve-

conveniently, and effectually anſwered under the authority of parliament.

That if parliament, as at preſent conſtituted, does not appear to poſſeſs the national confidence ſufficiently to render the contributions it might require, as they conſtitutionally ought to be, the free gift of the people; a reform in the parliamentary repreſentation ought immediately to be ſet on foot, in this and the other counties, as the only means of obtaining the chearful and national concurrence of the people on all emergencies.

That the plan of ſubſcription, however ſhort of a tax in point of efficiency, exceeds it far in burthen to individuals; ſince it morally compels many, to whom it may be unſpeakably inconvenient; and who may diſapprove the meaſure itſelf, but yet cannot refuſe the application.

That in point of precedent, it is exceedingly dangerous to give force to the executive power, without the conſent of the legiſlative; and it will be remembered, that ſo juſtly jealous is the Houſe of Commons, in behalf of its conſtituents, of this privilege, as not to ſuffer a bill connected with ſupplies to originate or be altered in the other houſe. The objection, that even thoſe who wiſh the meaſure had not been propoſed muſt now deſire to ſee it accompliſhed, appears

pears to want a ſolid foundation. I apprehend no triumph to our enemies that can be worth a thought, from the failure of the plan. The ſubſcription has originated, I believe, in generoſity; it may be laid aſide neither from meanneſs or want of ſtrength, but due conſideration. It may prove, that we dare rely on our conſtitutional defence. That we can abandon a ſcheme which might flatter our national liberality, when we perceive it to be neceſſarily connected with effects injurious to our conſtitution; and that we have citizens who can generouſly relinquiſh what they have diſintereſtedly propoſed, when they perceive the greater good of their country to be concerned.

Yours, &c.

C. L.

September 19, 1782.

To the EDITOR of the BURY POST,

SIR,

WHEN I ſent you my former letter, in anſwer to ſome objections I had heard to the meaſure now carrying into execution in this county, I did not expect that a production ſo harmleſs as mine could have drawn me into any controverſy. A letter however, in reply has appeared, ſigned C. L. which makes it neceſſary either to take up the pen again, or permit an opinion very ably and powerfully urged, but which I conceive to be exceedingly erroneous, to take place in the minds of my countrymen; to do this would be a ſeeming deſertion of a cauſe which appears to me ſo ſtrong, that if I muſt be in oppoſition to ſuch reſpectable abilities, I could never wiſh for an occaſion more adequate to the inferiority of my own. I have a few obſervations to make

make in reply, which I ſhall ſubmit to the attention of your readers. The prominent feature in the face of the argument is the queſtion of its being a conſtitutional and legal meaſure. It is called *an exceedingly dangerous precedent*; but it muſt ſtrike every one that it is the copy of a precedent already ſet by the Eaſt-India Company, at a time when thoſe men were miniſters whoſe principles and actions are now ſo much execrated; and conſequently at a time when the greateſt friends to the conſtitution (if thoſe are the moſt to be ſo eſteemed who have not only wiſhed but acted for the independency of parliament) were in the daily exertion of the moſt alert and ſpirited oppoſition, perhaps, ever ſeen in this freeſt of countries. If that precedent was illegal, I will not aſk why it was accepted by the great men who then acted *with* government; but why it was not oppoſed—why it paſſed uncondemned, by men who were on the *qui vive* to oppoſe whatever would reaſonably admit of oppoſition? Could not the keen and ſplendid talents of a Shelburne or a Fox diſcover the danger? Was it equally hidden from the intrepid ſagacity of a Dunning—and the mild but luminous range of a Camden's mind? Were all theſe and a hundred other centinels aſleep on their poſts? Far from it. They

ſaw the meaſure in its progreſs, and joined their voices, like good citizens, to the univerſal applauſe that ſprang in praiſe of it from every boſom. Will it be ſaid that theſe men knew not the ſpirit of our conſtitution, and that they commended what they ought to have condemned? That the reach of their talents fell ſhort of a queſtion reſerved for the ſagacity of the individual who now takes the lead in doing what the wiſeſt men of the age unfortunately failed to do? Yet this muſt be ſaid by him who will tell us the preſent is an unconſtitutional meaſure. For my own part, I am not ſo ready to ſet aſide the opinions of all that are great and eminent in a country, upon a queſtion of legality; but muſt be ready to confeſs, that when I ſee the firſt lawyers of the age, whatever their politics or party, yet agreed to paſs ſuch a tranſaction not in ſilence, but with applauſe, it convinces me that it is not a meaſure of danger to the conſtitution.

To come, however, to the reaſon of the thing—This danger of the precedent is ſaid to lay in ſtrengthening the hands of the executive power, without the authority of parliament. But the ſpecioufneſs of this objection is ſoon ſeen through. Suffolk, it is true, is to build the hulk of a ſhip, but who is to ſend it to ſea? Parliament. Who is to man it and pay the men? Parliament.

Thus

Thus this precedent of dangerous tendency can never become efficient—can give no ſtrength whatever to government, without the fiat of the people's repreſentatives. The wit of man, therefore, could ſcarcely have conceived a more unexceptionable mode of bringing the patriotic feelings of individuals into active life and vigour.

To ſay that merely building a hulk is giving a dangerous aſſiſtance—which, without the ſanction of the legiſlature can never carry a cannon—ſpread a yard of canvas—or ever bear to diſtant ſhores this proof of our zeal for the ſervice of our country, is in other words to aſſert, that all voluntary aſſiſtance whatever is illegal; that ſubſcriptions for the Marine Society—for warm cloathing ſent to regiments in a winter's campaign—for fuel or food to a ſtarving garriſon—nay that moſt humane one for the widows and orphans of the brave fellows loſt in the Royal George—that all theſe are unconſtitutional, ſince there is not one of them but ſtrengthens the hands of government without the authority of parliament. The eſſence and ſpirit of a meaſure are to be looked at, not trifling diſtinctions—for whether I give money or woollens, or food —or oak timber and the labour of ſhipwrights, the ſtrength derived to the government from the gift is the object; if one is

illegal

illegal—the reſt are the ſame: but the argument leads to a degree of ridicule; as a man on ſuch a principle might ſay, that through an extreme affection for his country he would not give her a ſingle ſhilling.

No precedent is to be extended to circumſtances which it does not juſtify. The preſent meaſure goes no further than to give that to the public which may by the legiſlature be converted into a military force. If a county was to proceed upon a plan totally different, that of building, equipping, manning, paying and ſupporting a ſhip without the conſent of parliament, the author might then fairly ſtart his objections to it as a dangerous meaſure, and the queſtion might be debated---but not to make this obvious diſtinction is to forget the very hinge upon which his own principles make the queſtion turn.

Perhaps this ſingle point is all that is neceſſary to urge in reply to the leading argument which pervades the letter; but it may not be improper to ſay a word or two on ſo ſtrenuouſly rejecting the interpoſition of the people on this or ſimilar propoſitions.

From the expreſſions of the letter we may be clear, that the writer thinks the conſtitution very incomplete, from the imperfection of the repreſentation; yet any idea

idea of not truſting body and ſoul to this repreſentation is reprobated as highly dangerous. Thus we are to know that we have a *corrupt*, *defective* repreſentation, and yet we are in the eſſential article of our naval defence, to put entire faith in it! If the people of England are diſſatisfied with the conduct of parliament in relation to the inferiority of the navy, ſhall it be aſſerted by a friend to their intereſt, that it is unconſtitutional in them to meet---to aſſociate---to ſubſcribe their money for aiding that neglected ſervice their ſafety depends on; and thereby pointing out to their repreſentatives, in the moſt lively manner, their conviction of ſuch neglect, and determination to ſee it remedied! And muſt not this be done till the repreſentation itſelf is altered---new experiments made---ſpeculations realiſed---and the moſt arduous and difficult buſineſs a free people can ever engage in, not only began and completed, but the effects of it felt!---Engaged in a dangerous and bloody war, we are to ſee our navy inferior to that of the enemy---we are to know our ability to increaſe it---we are to feel the nobleſt emotions that can dignify the boſoms of free men, a readineſs to contribute to the wants of their country:---but we are to do nothing in conſequence of all this;---becauſe ſome ideal (and for what

I know

I know very proper, but difficult) improvements are not made in the conſtitution, we are ſo to connect one idea with another, as to hang ſuſpended in inactivity, and becauſe we cannot effect all, prudently determine to do nothing!

The reader, doubtleſs, prevents me, in remarking the ſtrange contraſt of ſentiment that reprobates a ſubſcription for a ſhip as illegal, yet recommends military corps, *after the example of Ireland**, to be raiſed and

* In the letter ſigned Alfred, ſent by Mr. Lofft to the Bury Poſt—It is not eaſy to conceive a weaker doctrine than to offer in this reſpect to our imitation, the conduct of Ireland—the caſes are not parallel; the armed aſſociations have emancipated that kingdom from commercial and religious bigotry, and placed their conſtitution (when the ſword ſhall be ſubſervient to the civil power, which is not the caſe yet) upon the ſame footing as that of England. But armed aſſociations to ſuch an extent among us, as to place them above all other power, the caſe of Ireland, could only be eſtabliſhed to controul OUR OWN LEGISLATURE, not that of another country which had ſhackled our freedom and trade; and if eſtabliſhed by wreſting the ſword from the branch of the legiſlature in which the conſtitution has placed it, would in effect be a civil war, ending either in a military deſpot or a republic. I am ready to agree, that the feelings of a republican (however wrong-headed) have the merit of claiming diffuſive liberty; he loves others as well as himſelf: whereas the partizan of deſpotiſm can love no other, and calls for one great tyrant, that he may, by the reflection of his power, be a little one himſelf. Far as the poles aſunder be this country from either. That boſom which feels not freedom under our conſtitution, was not born for liberty, but for bedlam.

diſciplined

diſciplined *independant of the crown.* Or in other words, to do that againſt which there is neither law nor reaſon is unconſtitutional; but to act in defiance of the poſitive ſtatutes of the realm, ſo far from being illegal, would be *acting in conformity to reaſon and the conſtitution.*

Mr. Lofft having condemned without reſerve the mode of cutting ſhort this devouring war, by the common means of convincing our enemies that we are not exhauſted, gives a very remarkable reaſon for it, *a ſhew of preparation for war,* ſays he, *would prove our neceſſities and weakneſs, not our vigour*; and obſerves, that we cannot dictate a peace by theſe means: this is a very extraordinary doctrine, but I do not think it will have force ſufficient to ſtop that current of feeling which has carried the ſubſcription to its preſent reſpectable length: for if preparation for war, and much more that which is founded on a free ſubſcription, be the proof of weakneſs, then the neglect of ſuch preparation, or *a miniſter ſquandering and miſapplying naval reſources,* will be the beſt demonſtration of ſtrength; and taxes torn from a helpleſs people by the bayonet, more formidable to an enemy than the voluntary efforts of a free and wealthy nation.

But theſe efforts are *an abandonment of all the conſtitutional reſources;—the reſource of*

It is not very eaſy to anſwer what it is not very eaſy to underſtand: a voluntary addition to the uſual reſources of the ſtate being an abandonment of thoſe of the conſtitution, is a poſition which either turns on an argument I have already refuted, or it means, that becauſe the ſubſcription is voluntary, therefore it proves deſpair:—but in either caſe this circumſtance is to be remembered, that the free aids of the people, given in a marked manner to a favourite and conſtitutional ſervice, is ſo far from being a ſign that they abandon the common reſources (overflowing as they have proved), that it writes in characters for the whole world to read, not that the reſources of the nation are inſufficient, but that THIS IS THE CHANNEL IN WHICH WE WISH THEM TO FLOW.—To talk of deſpair in this country, I leave to Mr. L.—let him open his eyes—let him—but whither am I wandering?—Let the agents of France examine the reſources of this kingdom and write, if they pleaſe, in their diſpatches, of deſpair; it is not of much conſequence to us whether Monſ. de Vergennes diſmiſſes them as fools, or hangs them for knaves.

But if this mode of convincing our enemies of the plenitude of our reſources meets with ſo ſevere a condemnation, what are thoſe which the writer of the letters propoſes in lieu

lieu of them? he has his propoſition: and having been ſo very attentive to ſap the foundations whereon others have erected their edifice, doubtleſs he has made his own choice with all the maturity of deliberation—theſe are his words, *Prudence and moderation, and proof of our ſincerity, will be the moſt probable means of enſuring peace.*

And now, Sir, permit me—not without ſome ſmall emotion of ſurprize, to aſk the intelligent reader what may be his feelings on this very ſober and gentle reference to the meek virtues of prudence and moderation! In another paſſage he condemns the mode of ſubſcription for being *ſlow and precarious*, and aſſerts, that parliament would do it *more ſpeedily*. What! that parliament which muſt be reformed before it can undertake ought that is good? Are we to mend the conſtitution in the firſt inſtance, in order that it may in return mend our navy ſooner than we can do it ourſelves? Does he recommend us to prudence becauſe celerity is its characteriſtic, or to moderation becauſe its uſual concomitants are vigour and deciſion? Prudence and moderation are indeed admirable qualities, and peculiarly fitted to be the guide of thoſe who would work changes in a conſtitution that has ſtood for centuries the admiration of mankind: but to let all the animation, all the enthuſiaſm

of poetry hurry us to the cloſet to contrive ſpeculative improvements in the political machine:—but to call to the warm boſom that pants for the glory of the country—to withhold the hand lifted againſt her enemies—to damp the kindling ardour of a great people riſing to thoſe efforts that ſhall emulate their father's fame—to do this at the ſame time with all the coldneſs of proſe; may be perfectly conſiſtent with ſome ſpecies of prudence and moderation—but if the hearts of Engliſhmen are to be thus chilled, it may truly be ſaid, that they *are incapable of being rouſed by the thouſand dangers that ſurround them.*

There are other paſſages, Sir, in your correſpondent's letters, which would afford me opportunity of diſcuſſion, but I have already blotted more paperthan I expected. I ſay nothing of his objection to the ſubſcribtions, *becauſe it preſſes on a particular county and exempts the reſt:* it was evidently a ſlip of the pen for want of recurring to the laſt reſolution of the committee. Nor do I touch on the *unſpeakable inconvenience of a ſubſcription to individuals.* I could enlarge upon it: in truth it affords matter of very eaſy triumph; but far be it from me to take up the reader's attention on trivial points, thrown out, perhaps, to catch the unwary, but certainly not with any view of ſerious argument.

But

But let us reverſe the buſineſs—let us give that generoſity to France which Mr. L. would prevent in England: if we were to be now informed that the provinces of that kingdom had proceeded ſo vigorouſly on ſuch a plan as to effect the addition of 30 or 40 ſail of the line to their navy—would ſuch intelligence be received in this country with pleaſure? Would it denote their abandonment of other reſources, or mark an effort of deſpair? Would it not rather tell us that the nation felt the neceſſity of having a ſuperior navy, and willingly paid for an object eſſential to their welfare? Would it not prove to us that they were far from being exhauſted—that they looked for a continuance of the war, and were prepared to meet its burthens with chearfulneſs? This is the language it would ſpeak, and he is a bold Engliſhman who could liſten to it without terror. Then let us judge of their feelings by our own, and if they proſecute the war with vigour, thinking the reſources of this country exhauſted and the people languiſhing for peace, what news can be ſo fatal to their expectations as this demonſtration of their error.

Permit me alſo to ſtart another ſuppoſition which will place the ſubject in a different light: Suppoſe the noble Lord who has taken the lead in this buſineſs with a ſpirit that

that does him ſo much honour, had been liſtened to when he made ſo repeatedly in converſation the ſame propoſition two years ago; that Suffolk had ſet the example ſhe is now doing, and followed by the reſt of the kingdom; we ſhould now be launching 40 or 50 ſail of the line: every man muſt feel that parliament in order to man thoſe ſhips would have adopted meaſures, the tendency of which muſt have been the perpetual renovation of our conſtitutional force. We ſhould have been at this time in the poſſeſſion of a fleet that would have ſuffered no emotions of deſpondency in the boſom of a Briton: our proſpect would have been brilliant; our hope ſanguine but juſt; and a ſpeedy and honourable peace, the reward of our liberality and foreſight.

And now, Sir, you will permit me to conclude with one obſervation, which I would preſs on the attention of this reſpectable and very ingenious gentleman. It is founded on the ſuppoſition that he is able to overturn what is nearly effected; and that his opinion has more weight than that of what I may call a very great majority of the county. Let us ſuppoſe that he was to ſucceed—that the propoſition was to fail, in expectation of a conſtitutional reform effecting it in a better manner—that we drop the ſcheme; and that other counties yielding to the

the ſame eloquence, ſhould likewiſe lay it aſide. Suppoſe alſo, what is much more probable, that the alteration in the repreſentation to which we are ſo repeatedly referred, ſhould fail likewiſe. Then let me bring it to the reflection of this gentleman, what would be the feelings of his countrymen—what the indignation burning in every boſom, if a certain practical good within their reach had been loſt for hopes which proved viſionary on the touchſtone—tedious—difficult—diſputed by one ſet of men, abhorred by another, and at laſt, notwithſtanding its merit, null and void to all. Would it then be accepted as an apology, to ſay that the people had not virtue enough to carry the theory of ſpeculators into practice? They would feel the inſult, not acknowledge the argument. The Bourbon flag riding in triumph on our coaſts would bring to their recollection the meaſure, that would have prevented the renewal of national diſgrace: little would it then avail the enemies of that meaſure to ſpeak of the ideal perfection they ſighed for in the conſtitution.---The people would feel that they had been deluded by the refinements of ſpeculation, and their expreſſion of thanks for the ſervice, would be no balm for the wounds which diſappointment would give to the viſions of ingenuity.

I am, &c.

September 26, 1782. A. Y.

To the EDITOR of the BURY POST.

SIR,

IF my perſonal wiſhes had been alone concerned in the argument which has occupied your paper, I might have retired content; ſince, whether I fall or conquer, I am honoured by my antagoniſt: the hope of being ſubſervient to public utility animated my endeavours; the ſame hope recalls me to the charge; encreaſed rather than abated by the vigour which ſupports a meaſure, to my apprehenſion, neither beneficial nor conſtitutional.

A writer who ſigns his name, forfeits, by ſo committing himſelf to the public, all pretenſion to many advantages; and is veiled from no cenſure to which he may be thought liable. The initals C.L. were rightly referred by your correſpondent; and were not intended to be otherwiſe underſtood: but only to avoid the ſeeming impertinence of repeatedly obtruding on the public a name in which they have no other concern, than as a pledge that the

the author throws himſelf upon the candour of the county he inhabits, as one who in withholding his mite has not been actuated by motives which he can heſitate to avow.

Whether the ſubſcription thus long depending be ſimilar to ſomething the Eaſt India Company may have done, I have not thought it material to enquire. Nor am I ſolicitous to determine what ſhare of acquieſcence may have been given to ſuch an attempt either now or formerly. Forbid it, Freedom! Forbid it the ſenſe and ſpirit of my countrymen, that precedents, of much greater frequency and more authentic ſtamp ſhould obtain implicit truſt; or the names of ſtateſmen and lawyers, however eminent, preclude examination upon a ſubject like this! The beſt ſtateſmen are by ſituation no fit authority by whoſe either practice or opinion conſtitutional rights ſhould be decided. Thoſe rights, equally intelligible, equally the rule and conduct to all, the Peaſant, the Judge, the Miniſter, and the King, admit of no juſt deciſion but that of thoſe on the conſent of whom they are eſtabliſhed, and for whom only they exiſt—the community at large. And with all my attachment to an honourable profeſſion, never will I ſubmit to the tenet that the voice of the firſt lawyers of this, or any age, ought to convince an Engliſhman of a meaſure ſanctioned

by them, being therefore of no danger to the conſtitution. A great, an enlightened, a free people, muſt diſdain to hold its liberties by the tenure of any opinion but its own. But the authority of lawyers, were it allowed a weight, however unduely preponderating, never means any thing leſs than judgement upon a caſe judicially before them. Is this ſuch a caſe, or does it bear the ſemblance of being one? And in relation to precedent, if the ſingle inſtance of the Eaſt-India Company has already made it preſumptious to queſtion the propriety of this ſubſcription, another precedent may perhaps mature it into an abſolute duty, and hardly leave to the offering the name of voluntary. At preſent, the caſe of ſhip-money I conceive to differ in the direct and apparent compulſion enforced on the individual; but in the point of being an aid given to government, without national concurrence, I do apprehend it preciſely to coincide.

To thoſe of a certain rank and fortune, the preſent mode will indeed be more agreeable: to others, the difference may not be ſo advantageous between the demands of force and ſolicitations of leſs apparent cogency. To the community, the danger has been always greateſt when it has not appeared in a ſhape to call forth reſiſtance.

Conſcious

Conſcious of this, the wiſdom of the free ſtates of antiquity (the gentleman to whom I reply is no ſtranger to the fact) has choſen to reſtrict the power of making donations, where the gift was likely to be ſo circumſtanced, as by the various conſequences to which a refuſal would ſtand obnoxious, not to leave the perſons of whom it ſhould be aſked to the due exerciſe of an independent choice. Even in private life, delicacy, honour, and juſtice, alike enjoin a reſerve, where we have reaſon to ſuſpect a requeſt, however ſoftened, will be felt as a command.

Benevolences our conſtitution has ever watched with a jealouſy equally ſevere and juſt. The mildneſs of the name, the generoſity and virtue which frequently might prompt the intention, prevailed not to relax the ſtern vigilance of our anceſtors: who ſaw in the collective ſenſe of the people, the independence of the conſtitution, and the undeviating regularity of general contributions, levied by the advice of the national council, the only ſafe, adequate, and permanent reſources. But on my principles, it ſeems, the object of this ſubſcription cannot be unconſtitutional, becauſe it is no more than the building of an hulk: and with all the vivacity of Ciceronian interrogation, we are inſtructed to aſk, what

unleſs the ſhip be manned, paid and ſupplied by parliament, what can be the evil or the good of the ſubſcription? I do not quote the words, but I hope not to miſrepreſent the ſentiment. Had the propoſers of the plan judged it practicable to attempt furniſhing a ſhip with its complete equipage, and to ſupport the whole burthen of its future eſtabliſhment, I can by no means perceive, that the ground which muſt juſtify or condemn the propoſal, would have been materially varied; we ſhould only have been to meet the ſame explanation a ſtep or two lower in the argument; as it would not be unreaſonable to allow, that ſhould parliament refuſe the ſupplies neceſſary for the general fleet, the ſhip, ſhould it be completed, armed, manned, and ſtored by a ſubſcription raiſed in the county, would be ſtill uſeleſs. The true idea appears to be of this nature. If government found ſuch a ſhip built for them, by whatever means, they would not go to the parliament to put her into commiſſion, to vote men; or to grant even ſupplies for that ſhip particularly; but the ſupplies would be granted without any particular reference to that ſhip, for the general maintenance of the ſervice. Therefore, that ſhe cannot be manned without parliament, equipped or ſent to ſea without parliament, ſeems not

to

to be intelligible, in the ſenſe in which it muſt be aſſerted to be of any uſe to the argument. She would ſtand exactly circumſtanced in this reſpect like the other ſhips, with this difference: that thoſe have been built by means of ſupplies originally granted for that purpoſe, under parliamentary authority; parliament has taken upon itſelf, that ſuch was the proper and adequate eſtabliſhment for the naval ſervice. If that eſtabliſhment be however defective, what muſt our enemies think of our reſources, ſhould the means of rendering it equal to the object of our defence be ſo irregular, ſlow, precarious and defective as thoſe now in diſpute evidently are?

As for the ſubſcriptions repreſented to be ſimilar to this, the reader will wonder when he ſees the charitable donations to the families of thoſe who were loſt in the Royal George, mentioned as not defenſible, unleſs the ſhip-building ſcheme can be defended. The other inſtances require no diſcuſſion, for the purpoſe of illuſtrating or ſupporting either ſide of this argument.

As to the ludicrous remark, that a perſon through extreme affection for his country will not give her ſhilling, I leave that ſtroke of wit in its full force. With the ſame tranquility I reſign to the amuſement of thoſe readers whom it may entertain, the

the refined and elegant badinage ſo highly ſeaſoned with compliments to the French court, where fools, it ſeems, are certain to be diſcarded, and knaves conſigned to the cord.

I do not talk of deſpair—but of what do thoſe talk who can reſt their hopes upon the moſt inſubſtantial baſis, while they ſtart at the idea of reform, and raiſe ſpectres of the augmentation of Gallic power (at other times ſo ſlightly and contemptuouſly treated) to which Engliſhmen are to liſten with terror? Of what do thoſe talk who are alarmed at voluntary independent aſſociations, the demonſtration of genuine patriotiſm, and the ſure defence of national freedom? Let us reject the notion of deſpondency; and therefore let us avoid a confidence miſplaced, which ever, through diſappointment, terminates in deſpair.

The idea of implicit confidence in the repreſentative body is not mine. Were it neither defective nor corrupt, it is a truſt too limited for a nation to repoſe. But admitting the repreſentation to deſerve the cenſure imputed to it, which includes every thing ignominious and fatal, we are to poſtpone the reform, are to know nothing of its nature, are coolly to allow the neceſſity of ſome untried and unthought relief, till the county of Suffolk ſhall have ſurmounted

all

all the thouſand dangers that ſurround us, by the ſhip which is to be ſubſcribed with the aſſiſtance of the twelve other counties; to whom, if the plan ſhall appear feaſible and conſtitutional, and uſeful, and a ſufficient number of their inhabitants ſhall concur to give ſhips to government, and leave to contingencies the filling and maintaining of thoſe ſhips, there will be ſome time or other a quantity of hulks to conſole us for whatever beſides may be neglected. For that hulks will be all which the full ſucceſs of the meaſure can beſtow, is indeed made the merit of the plan by your correſpondent; whoſe abilities, had the field of their exertion been more auſpicious, would, doubtleſs, have found ſomething better to commend the propoſal than its defectiveneſs. I forbear to preſs the argument—but on the ſide of procraſtination there is nothing loſt by poſtponing reform to this kind of preparative for war, except merely the revival of our conſtitutional exiſtence. For where is the conſtitution that has ſtood for centuries the admiration of mankind; and which is preſented to our imagination as if now ſtanding in primæval ſtability and perfection? O my countrymen, your eyes do not ſo much need to be opened as not to ſee and lament the inroads of time, and treachery and violence, on the glorious fabric! Ye ſee its

ruins

ruins! Ye ſee a barbarous pile of diſcordant parts ſubſtituted in the place of the fair harmony of its proportions? Ye ſee inſignificant and vile ornaments inſult the majeſtic towers whoſe remains are yet aweful? Ye ſee intermixed with the reliques of antient ſtructure, new materials, the ſport of every blaſt, and threatening the entire deſtruction of the whole by their corruptneſs! Foundations ye behold undermined! And chuſe ye to ſtand the aſſaults of all the enemies which frenzy and iniquity have provoked againſt you, without a preſent endeavour to repair your once impregnable fortreſs? Are the boroughs, ſuch as ye now ſee them, and mourn the baneful effects of their diſproportioned ſhare in the repreſentation—are theſe a part of the wonder of ages? Is the arbitrary transfer of elective right from the man, to property of a certain ſpecies? No, ye reply with indignant ſpirit—our Alfreds, our Edwards, our liberating Barons, our free and virtuous Commons of former days have another image of the conſtitution they ſo nobly purchaſed, at every hazard, to ſet before our eyes. But if theſe are comparatively recent, what think ye of *ſeptennial parliaments*, whoſe eſtabliſhment men are yet living to remember. What even of *triennial*; prior but a few years, and not yet equalling the duration of a century?

tury? We ſeek not to innovate, but to reſtore the conſtitution? to which war, ſhould it be unexpectedly ſucceſsful, far from contributing, muſt be an additional obſtacle. We are not fearful of being weakened in our defence of our country, by the recovery of all that is worthy to be defended. But we will not be the inſtruments, under any miniſtry, of deſigns which are to be conducted under the ſanction of a parliament, whoſe voice is not derived from the conſent of the nation. Deprived of all conſtitutional controul, and the very principles of national union, our elective rights, thrown into chaos, we will not raſhly and injuriouſly lend an aid, too likely to be ineffectual, whatever may be its external object; perhaps deſtined for purpoſes in which inefficacy itſelf would not be the worſt of evils; and at all events, not only inadequate, but incompatible with thoſe ends for which alone we ought to wiſh to exiſt. We are not ſo unmindful of our fathers, of freedom, of virtue, of the name of Engliſhmen; we will not be thus unfaithful to ourſelves, poſterity, and the rights of mankind. GIVE US OUR RIGHTS, and we feel ourſelves invincible. Theſe not re-eſtabliſhed, tell us not of a ſhip to be ſubſcribed by one county, or of any other partial expedient to be propoſed by another.

The evil is too deep, too extenſive for ſuch palliatives. Until the hand and voice of the people be united by a full, equal, reformed repreſentation; until the delegated power be ſecured from abuſe, by reſtoring the antient frequency of its return to the commonalty, too much of the conſtitution is already ſacrificed to juſtify our neglect, or excuſe our farther diminution of the ſmall remains; or ſuffer us to ſuſpend our efforts for the reſtoration of our invaluable rights.

Similar to theſe, I truſt, are the ſentiments of my countrymen. For myſelf, I ſhall add little. The eaſy triumph which my antagoniſt informs the reader he has forborne, merits a return of courteſy. As he confeſſes it related to trivial points, the individual poſſibly may have cauſe to thank him; but it was beneath his or the public care. Conſcious of the ſtrength of my cauſe, I ſhall now conclude: deſiring the attention of the gentleman who has honoured me with his reply, and of my readers in general, into whoſe hands this may come, if adopted in your well-regulated paper, not ſo much to any words of mine as to thoſe of the CONSTITUTIONAL SOCIETY, who in their RESOLVE of the 27th of September, have declared their opinion, *That raiſing any ſums of money for building ſhips*

ſhips of war by voluntary ſubſcription is unconſtitutional; and that no aids ought to be granted to the crown, but by the authority of parliament; every other method of procuring public ſupplies being of the moſt dangerous tendency.

Yours, &c.

C. L.

October 10, 1782.

To the EDITOR of the BURY POST.

SIR,

HAD I conceived that ſigning only initials to papers known to be mine, from the converſation of all my friends, could have been imputed to me as *veiling myſelf from cenſure, and uſing advantages unknown to my antagoniſt*, I ſhould have done before what I do now—ſet my name to ſentiments which I conceive to become a man, and not inconſiſtent with the love of liberty that does honour to a FREE one. He who diſſeminates opinions he is aſhamed to avow, may want a veil, my feelings are ſpontaneous, and their expreſſion has been as open as direct.

It is not unfrequently the caſe in controverſy, that the explanation of an opinion becomes a new one, or at leaſt gives ſuch varied lights as entirely to change the old: if this had not in ſome meaſure been the caſe with Mr. Lofft's, I do not think the paper

paper I am now writing would be demanded in the preſent ſtate of our argument. But he has ſtarted new ideas, and urged objections which did not appear before. To theſe I ſhall chiefly confine myſelf in my reply. A little attention is ſufficient to ſhew, that Mr. Lofft at preſent reſts his argument on theſe heads:

I. *That the caſe of the Eaſt-India Company is to be rejected, as the authority of lawyers acquieſcing is of no weight.*

I will not aſſert that the liberty of a people is to *depend* on the opinions of lawyers, nor did I ever aſſert it; but any man that was a witneſs to the noble ſtand made by Mr. Dunning in the Houſe of Commons, on the high ſeas treaſon bill, and by Lord Camden, in the other houſe, on the Quebec act, will be ready to admit that ſuch men in a warm oppoſition to the court, were not likely to permit the hands of a miniſtry they deteſted, to be illegally ſtrengthened, without calling the public attention to the buſineſs that had ſuch an effect. Their ſilence in ſuch a ſituation was a very different affair from *opinions giving a ſanction to meaſures dangerous to the conſtitution*. Experience has proved the latter in many caſes; it is not ſo eaſy to produce a parallel inſtance

of

the former. But all authority is to be rejected—Indeed!—Then why does your correſpondent wind up his epiſtle with preſſing on the particular attention of the reader an authority to which he chuſes to look up in the teeth of his own principles. *The Conſtitutional Society has reſolved the ſubſcription to be illegal!* This is truly a manœuvre I did not expect. The opinions and conduct of all the great lawyers I named are of no weight. Ye Shelburnes, Foxs, Burkes; Ye Savilles, Graftons, Richmonds—Ye little ſtars hide your diminiſhed heads! Your ideas bring no credit to a cauſe—your acquieſcence can give no ſanction to a meaſure! *Forbid it, Freedom!* that our liberties ſhould hang on the weak thread of your authority. Your conduct is of little conſequence, while our patriot can at command direct the thunder of a more formidable artillery: he can bring an authority to which even Britiſh freedom is to bow—THE CONSTITUTIONAL SOCIETY!

II. *That if the caſe of the Eaſt-India Company be taken as a precedent, another will convert it into an abſolute duty.*

If this objection has any meaning, it declares that we are not to do a good thing twice, leaſt the perverſity of human nature ſhould

ſhould convert good actions into bad precedents. The reader muſt ſee in a moment that this is a reference to the nature of the precedent: if it is founded, as I conceive, in the moſt liberal principles of genuine freedom, no matter how ſoon the precedent is matured into a duty. While the world endures, it muſt be a duty of voluntary exertion, as the precedent on which it is founded extends no further.

III. *That the ſubſcription claſſes with the caſe of ſhip-money in the reign of Charles I.*

I am perſuaded, that to quote this objection is a ſufficient refutation. Mr. Lofft ſays, that *in the point of compulſion the caſes differ, but in being an aid to government they coincide.* Is not this admitting that one caſe is compulſive, and the other voluntary? Can they then be arranged in the ſame claſs? If they can, then, Sir, we have been occupying columns of your paper to a moſt miſerable purpoſe indeed, ſince all our lucubrations end in no more than this—that liberty and ſlavery are the ſame thing. Ship-money was levied as a tax, by the authority of the crown alone. If it bore the leaſt ſimilitude to the preſent ſubſcription would a Hampden's laurels have carried their verdure to the preſent moment? If a ſingle negative

to

to the tax-gatherer had ſufficed, an end would ſoon have been put to the queſtion and the revenue, and no Gray would have recalled to our remembrance

" The village HAMPDEN, that with dauntleſs breaſt
" The little tyrant of his fields withſtood."

IV. *That the ſupplies in parliament being voted generally, and not to particular ſhips, the conſent of the Commons to the county ſhips could not be ſo obtained as to bear fairly in the preſent queſtion.*

An error in fact. Mr. Lofft has only to examine the admiralty eſtimates, and he will find that every ſhip is ſpecified. The caſe of thoſe of the Eaſt-India Company is exactly in point; for the Houſe of Commons voted £.6000 for their completion; and ſhip the Suffolk, ſhould ſhe ever float, can only do it by particular and expreſs eſtimate.

V. *That the great recommendation of the plan is its defectiveneſs.*

Mr. Lofft will pardon me, if I think this play of argument unworthy of his abilities. He was right not to preſs it. Is the plan defective becauſe the county is not to victual, man, and pay the ſhip? The intention of the meaſure is to add a ſhip of the line

line to the navy. If it ſucceeds it will make ſuch an addition. The intention of the Eaſt-India Company was to add three ſail of the line to it. They did add three ſail to it. Where is the defectiveneſs of this? Strange that the very circumſtance (the public participating in the expence) which completely does away every conſtitutional objection, ſhould be fixed on as a ſtamp of deficiency! If the Conſtitutional Society make Mr. Lofft a preſent of 5000l. to build a houſe, will he ſay the intention is defective without five more to furniſh it? —But theſe are trifles, Sir, compared with the great pillar of your correſpondent's argument, which is ſo remarkable, that I ſhall tranſcribe his words.

IV. *We ſeek not to innovate, but to reſtore the conſtitution; to which war, ſhould it prove unexpectedly ſucceſsful, far from contributing, muſt be an additional obſtacle.*

When the reader recollects the ſtrange arguments that have been urged againſt this propoſal, ſo foreign to the queſtion, and ſo contradictory in themſelves, he will not be ſurprized to have heard them among the impertinencies of common converſation, but amazed that they could flow from the pen of a man of abilities, unleſs ſome ſecret

view, or unavowed ſentiment was lurking behind the oſtenſible ones. Mr. Lofft did not ſpeak out before; he has done it now explicitly, and left us no room to doubt what his real ideas are. In the opinion of every candid man they will be conſidered, I believe, as an entire dereliction of the queſtion, if not a complete ceſſion of it to his adverſary; for what is this but very plainly aſſerting, that the propoſition of building a ſhip, if effected in this, and imitated in other counties, *will make the war* * *ſucceſsful, and* THEREFORE *I will oppoſe the meaſure.* This is admitting all that the friends of the ſcheme can aſk. We have no deſire ſo ardent: the warmeſt wiſh of our boſoms goes no further, than as the war is juſt, ſo let it be ſucceſsful. A reſtleſs ambition, and not the love of liberty, ſent the French to America: is it poſſible that any friend to his country can languiſh for her defeat, and ſigh over the meaſures that are to lead her to victory! 'Tis a miſerable conviction, that ſo laudable a ſentiment as the love of liberty can be diſtorted into ſuch a monſter of feeling as an apprehenſion of national ſucceſs. But the chain of reaſoning on which the opinion is formed ſeems

* The expreſſion is general, and not at all confined to the American one.

to

to be as fallacious, as the principle is reprehenſible; for the only effect which the conſtitution has felt from war, ſince its ſettlement at the revolution, has been an increaſe of influence from augmenting the national debt, which has been ſo little connected with the good or bad ſucceſs of war, that the preſent diſgraceful period has coſt us many millions more than all the glories that followed in the train of Mr. Pitt. Nor is it the miniſters of this country being popular, or deteſtable, that will influence the changes in the conſtitution called for by Mr. Lofft. The new popular miniſtry had no more thought of making an entire change in the repreſentation of the people, or having annual parliaments, than the old ones; and on its being brought to a ſolemn debate and vote, it was rejected by a great majority of men, delivering their opinions and their voices free from all miniſterial influence. How little reaſon then can there be to connect the execution of ſuch ſpeculations with the ill ſucceſs of the nation in war.

But if theſe are only oſtenſible arguments —if there lurks behind them the love of a republican government—if Engliſh freedom is inſufficient to pleaſe you—if you want the ſword lodged in hands independant of thoſe the conſtitution has placed it in—if there ought to be nothing ſo powerful in the

iſland as an armed multitude dictating to the legiſlature like that of Ireland—if we poſſeſs nothing at preſent too valuable to hazard on ſuch ſpeculations, then indeed this great ſupport of Mr. Lofft's argument is wiſe and conſiſtent, and he does juſtice to his own principles in execrating a meaſure, the tendency of which is to give ſucceſs to the arms of his countrymen.

I muſt, however, confeſs myſelf to be of a very different opinion; I wiſh for no republican government in this iſland---I think we are now the freeſt people on the globe, nor would I for ſpeculative improvements, hazard that noble pre-eminence---I know not how far ideas of reformation may be carried---much leſs do I know that thoſe who would in the laſt reſort execute them, would be controuled by the men who now are willing to tell us how far we ought to go. A ſpirit of reformation, which we are expreſsly told ought to be accompanied by armed aſſociations like thoſe of Ireland, would be much more likely to overturn than to mend the conſtitution. And I am above all confirmed in theſe ſentiments by the reflection, that the preſent ſyſtem will laſt while the people have either the virtue, or ſpirit of freedom; and when they are loſt, the edifice, improve it as you pleaſe, will ſtand no longer.

And

And now, Sir, you will permit me to withdraw from a controverſy which is not likely to produce conviction either in Mr. Lofft's mind or my own. If we write to convince others, they have by this time certainly formed their opinions; as I wiſh not to fatigue the attention of any of your readers, I ſhall finally conclude.

Yours, &c. &c.

ARTHUR YOUNG.

October 17, 1782.

To

To the EDITOR of the BURY POST,

SIR,

I AM concerned to find myſelf under the neceſſity of ſoliciting your patience, and the farther attention of your readers, on the ſubject of the laſt reply of Mr. Young; which I hope to be excuſed in doing, although he has declared his intention of withdrawing from the controverſy, as my deſign is ſimply to explain, and not to involve the queſtion in new matter, either foreign or really connected with it.

Indeed I am not conſcious, however my ſentiments may have been interpreted, of having deviated from the original ground: but think it will appear, that my arguments have conſtantly purſued the point with which they ſet out; which was, *That the ſubſcription for building a ſhip of war is unconſtitutional; ill adapted to the end of invigorating our naval operations; and in relation to our foreign, no leſs than domeſtic policy,*

licy, of a dangerous inſtead of beneficial tendency.

Mr. Young will not find me to have repreſented the caſe of ſubſcription, compared with that of ſhip-money, as having no affinity but that of the object of each being an aid to government. In direct apparent compulſion upon the individual, I ſaid they were diſtinguiſhable; but I affirmed (and no reaſon is offered to diſprove it), that in the leading feature which muſt characteriſe the meaſure, they preciſely coincide: being alike deſtitute of *national concurrence.*

It is ſaid, if Hampden had been aſſailed by nothing more than an application to ſubſcribe, he never could have made the glorious ſtand which has conſecrated his name; for a mere refuſal would have made an end of the buſineſs. Now, in my mind, till the meaſure be proved to be conſtitutional, it is no argument in its favour to obſerve, what is certainly the truth, that in its preſent ſhape it admits not of being brought to trial, as the affair of ſhip-money did. Hundreds may refuſe in this caſe; the majority of the county may be againſt it (and I am ſure in a rich and well-peopled county* the ſtate of the ſubſcription ſince the beginning

* Containing above 47,000 male inhabitants, of twenty-one and upwards, according to Davenant.

of

of Auguſt carries no mark of the majority being for it), and yet the queſtion can never come to be decided by the judgment of any court; unleſs the Houſe of Commons ſhould take notice of it as a breach of privilege: while in the caſe of ſhip-money the refuſal of a ſingle perſon would of courſe, as it did, bring the point to trial; and the infamy of the judgement in ſupport of that unconſtitutional meaſure, had as good an effect as the judgement which ought to have paſſed could have produced. It awakened the people; it called forth the glorious aſſertors of parliamentary and national right; and it eſtabliſhed the great maxim, coeval with the conſtitution, that aids not granted by the conſent of parliament are illegal, and ought to be reſcinded; whether extorted by the expreſs command of kings and miniſters, or appearing in the form of benevolences, loans, or ſubſcription; whether influence or open force, or the liberality of a virtuouſly intending mind be the ſource of a ſupply, of which it is ſufficient to have proved, that it is diſallowed by the conſtitution: which endures not to entruſt the peculiar excluſive province of the national aſſembly, to the private fears, hopes, opinions, or even virtues of individuals. My aſſertion that the plan is abſolutely defective no argument is advanced to refute. Reſpectable names, but

names

names ſtrangely grouped, are ſet in array for other purpoſes, which I ſhall notice before I conclude this letter. But the defectiveneſs of the ſcheme is ſo glaring, that whether its ingenious defender believes me ſerious, or ſuppoſes me to play with words, I muſt ſtill aſſert I can perceive no other merit proved by argument in its behalf, than only that ſuppoſing it to be adopted in the extent propoſed, the invention of the miniſter, the boundleſs liberality of parliament, and the nerves and ſinews of the nation, whoſe reſources at leaſt have bounds, muſt all be put to the rack to ſupply ways and means, in order to give the ſmalleſt portion of life to the deſign, when the county ſhall have finiſhed their part in it. And if inaccuracy is imputable to the idea I ſtated of the manner of voting ſupplies for the ſervice of the navy, my argument as corrected by my antagoniſt ſeems to acquire new ſtrength: but, without diſputing on a collateral circumſtance, it is clear and admitted, that if the meaſure could be carried into full effect by individuals, without parliament or the nation, this would be a deciſive objection on the grounds of the conſtitution; and it ſeems no leſs clear, that allowing the whole expence will be uſeleſs, and conſequently the reverſe of terror to our enemies, unleſs adopted by parliament, it ought not to be

carried ſo far before parliament is conſulted whether the preſent will be a benefit or an incumbrance. Of the number of ſhips which it is neceſſary and uſeful for us to have, parliament has a right and a duty to judge; eſtimating the exigencies of the ſtate, and the means of anſwering them. If the haſty generoſity (for ſo at beſt it is) of individuals anticipate the uſe of national deliberation on the ſum of things, good it is difficult to foreſee, but more miſchief and confuſion will be ſuggeſted to the reflecting mind, as the natural reſult, than words are adequate to expreſs. I touch this point of argument with tenderneſs, from wiſhes very different to thoſe of which I am accuſed. Feeble and raſh expedients are the moſt probable ſource of triumph to our enemies. I have no where ſaid that building a ſhip, if put in execution by this and twelve other counties, would render us ſucceſsful in the preſent war. A war of injuſtice and of madneſs in its origin, and of which the continuance has not altered my opinion, or improved my hopes, relative to its nature and tendency. I have ſubmitted in the whole courſe of the diſcuſſion of the ſubject, reaſons which convince me there is no rational probability that ſucceſs would be the effect of the intended augmentation; which, unleſs we have the means to ſupport

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the burthen of it, will be rather worſe than a nominal augmentation upon paper. But I ſhall never ceaſe to affirm, that repreſenting the ſtate of the conſtitution as but a ſecondary, if at all an object of public attention, is favouring a deluſion which would render defeat doubly gloomy, and ſucceſs in war unavailable; and is the greateſt obſtruction to every view in which our honour and ſecurity are concerned. War, Mr. Young acknowledges, neceſſarily increaſes influence; the conſtitution, even in full vigour, would by that influence be impaired and endangered. In our preſent circumſtances, to ſay that ſucceſs may be bought too dear, I think may be allowed by any man who prefers the liberty of his country to a pageant. But to buy a dream of ſucceſs by a ſacrifice which the forms and ſpirit of our conſtitution equally reprobate—what ſhall I ſay of ſuch a purchaſe?

With a mind which alike diſdains to give or receive general imputations, I will not return Mr. Young's compliment on my principles and views. I have no meaning which I am deſirous to hide. Reſpectable as the abilities are of the gentleman from whom I differ, he may be aſſured they have extorted no latent views, or unavowed ſentiment lurking behind the oſtenſible, for

none exiſted in my boſom ; I imputed none ; I merited to have none imputed.

Of the names of the Duke of Richmond and Mr. Fox, I am yet to learn how they could be properly introduced into an argument in favour of the preſent ſubſcription. But as an odium ſomeway connected with the queſtion is thrown upon the Conſtitutional Society, as if it were of a nature to have ſuch men for its enemies, Mr. Young is requeſted to recollect the conduct of the former in his bill for a more equal repreſentation, the great object of the ſociety. He will recollect too the conduct of Mr. Fox on ſimilar occaſions, and may ſoon be convinced their abilities and virtue do not ſtand oppoſed to the views of the ſociety. And the reſolve ſo indignantly cenſured againſt ſubſcription for building ſhips of war without authority of parliament, I believe myſelf not to hazard a miſtake in aſſerting, would appear in a very different light to them from that which the uſe made of their names ſuggeſts upon the preſent occaſion.

I have not employed the opinion of the Conſtitutional Society to overbear reaſon. That ſociety appeals to reaſon and conſtitutional evidence alone. It was not inſtituted on the narrow views of party ; its publications ſhew that it has not been infected with them in its courſe. It continues to increaſe

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in number and reſpectability, by the acceſſion of men, whoſe names are known to the public, and who are no ordinary pledge of perſeverance and ſucceſs in the pureſt and worthieſt deſign, the union of diſintereſted minds in the endeavour to revive the remembrance of the principles of the conſtitution; one of the eſſential maxims of which, I conceive to be vindicated by their opinion on the ſubſcription. For withdrawing from the argument I have now ſufficient reaſon: on what has been ſaid on either ſide the public is alone competent to determine. May the reſult be propitious to my country!

I am,

Yoor obliged correſpondent,

CAPEL LOFFT.

October 24, 1782.

The following Pieces appeared in a London Paper, on the ſame Subject, in Anſwer to ſome Eſſays againſt the Meaſure of building Ships by Subſcription.

To the EDITOR.

SIR,

THERE are men in this country, who do not concern themſelves with the politics of *perſons*, but attend anxiouſly to the politics of *things*: it would have been ſtrange if ſuch had not viewed the inferiority of the Britiſh navy, to that of her combined foes, with the moſt heartfelt diſtreſs, reflecting, as they muſt have done, on the poſſibility of increaſing it largely. Such a feeling gave riſe to the Suffolk ſubſcription.

The writer of this paper, who is an inhabitant of that county, repeatedly propoſed to ſome leading people in it, to unite with the plan of a ſubſcription, ſome other ſcheme, that might take place if the ſubſcription did not ſucceed; ſuch as inſtructing their repreſentatives to move in the Houſe of Commons an addreſs to the crown, declaratory of the general concern at ſeeing our naval power inferior to that of the Houſe of Bourbon; requeſting

his

his Majeſty to take ſuch meaſures for the conſiderable, effective, and ſpeedy increaſe of his navy, as in his wiſdom ſhould ſeem proper, and promiſing that that Houſe would with chearfulneſs make good the expence. I conceived that ſuch an inſtruction might have been copied by other counties; and that it might have gone into parliament a general voice, too powerful to be ſtifled or diſregarded. But this idea did not meet the minds of thoſe, whoſe conſideration in the county could have made it effective. Had the nation in general united in ſuch a meaſure, we ſhould not have been in the ridiculous ſituation we are in at preſent, truſting all things to the ſpontaneous emotions of men (I ſpeak of the members of the Houſe of Commons) who have ſo long ſeen this inferiority of our navy, and done nothing to improve it. We ſhould, on the contrary, have ſeen the approach of the meeting of parliament with confidence and pleaſure, knowing that it would be the ſignal of ſome deciſive ſteps, to give the people the ſatisfaction and ſecurity they demanded. We ſhould look with a warmth of expectation at new dock-yards (free from the abuſes of the old ones) being eſtabliſhed; and a naval militia-bill paſſed. Such ſteps would convey to us an idea, that no deſpon-

dency had taken place in the boſom of parliament, but that they were determined, let who would be miniſter, and whatever ſervice might ſuffer, that the NAVY ſhould triumph!

A. Y.

To the EDITOR.

SIR,

THE declarations of ſeveral of your correſpondents, that building ſhips by contribution is illegal, without at the ſame time quoting the ſtatutes upon which they found the opinion, have occaſioned my repeatedly enquiring of ſome gentlemen of the law who ſeemed adverſe to the ſubſcription, whether there was any ſtatute upon which they founded their idea? With no ſmall difficulty I have found that they conſider thoſe of the firſt of Richard III. and 13 Charles II. as operating againſt the meaſure in queſtion. Permit me through the channel of your paper, to give them a ſhort examination.

1 RICH.

1 RICH. CHAP. II.

The Subjects of this Realm ſhall not be charged with any Benevolence.

" The King remembering how the Commons of this his realm, by new and unlawful inventions, and inordinate covetiſe, againſt the law of this realm, have been put to great thraldom, and importable charges and exactions, and eſpecially by a new impoſition called a benevolence, whereby divers years the ſubjects and commons of this land, againſt their wills and freedoms, have paid great ſums of money to their almoſt utter deſtruction. For divers and many worſhipful men of this realm, by occaſion thereof, were compelled, by neceſſity, to break up their houſeholds, and to live in great penury and wretchedneſs, their debts unpaid, and their children unpreferred, to the great deſtruction of this realm. Therefore the King by the advice and aſſent," &c. &c. &c.

If this preamble had not been ſo deſcriptive of what a *benevolence* was, this ſtatute might have left us in the dark, and we might have been deceived by the title given to the tax; but that cannot be the caſe while we find it directly and explicitly a tax charged and levied without authority of parliament. —But the Duke of Buckingham, in the

ſame age, explained what a benevolence was, leſt any man ſhould erroneouſly miſtake it; he ſaid, *That the name of benevolence ſignified that every man ſhould pay not what he of his own good will liſt, but what the King of his good will liſt to take**.

13 CAR. II. Chap. IV.

An Act for a free and voluntary Preſent to his Majeſty.

EXP.

V. And be it hereby declared, that no commiſſions or aid of this nature can be iſſued or levied, but by authority of parliament; and that this act, and the ſupply hereby granted, ſhall not be drawn into example for the time to come.

The adverſaries of this meaſure are hard drove to find grounds for their objections, when they have reſort to a dead letter for their authority, for ſuch an expired ſtatute is: however, ſuppoſing it living and effective, it is nothing more than a comment on, and efficiency given to, that of Richard III. and declares, that commiſſions being iſſued out by the crown for *levying* aids, are illegal. The title of it proves no more than

* Barrington on the more ancient Statutes, 4to. 4th Edit. p. 433.

this,

this, that a commiſſion, iſſuing from the crown for *free* and *voluntary* preſents, is alſo illegal; ſince notwithſtanding the expreſſion, *free* and *voluntary*, it would be a benevolence levied by force. The King's predeceſſor had made very free with benevolences; and therefore no wonder it was thought neceſſary to paſs an act, before he could levy a ſum, by iſſuing a commiſſion.

And now, Sir, let the adverſaries to county ſubſcriptions, compare theſe benevolences with the preſent plan, and it will at once be evident, how eſſentially they differ. 1. Benevolences were taxes levied by force, to the ruin of thoſe who paid them. 2. Commiſſions for levying them, iſſued from the crown. 3. They were to raiſe money, which the King might apply to paying troops or any other purpoſe he pleaſed.

The common ſenſe and feelings of all mankind muſt revolt at the idea of claſſing *a really free ſubſcription, originating in the people, for building ſhips which can never ſwim, but by authority of Parliament*, with a tax levied forcibly by the crown, under all the circumſtances deſcribed in the act of Richard III.

A. Y.

To the EDITOR,

THE public prints having abounded with objections to the mode of increaſing the navy by ſubſcription, becauſe not ſo efficient as taxation, which goes equally to the whole kingdom; I ſhall, with your leave, offer a few conſiderations upon that part of the queſtion. The objection ſhews, that the plan is ill underſtood; It was never thought of as a ſuccedaneum to taxes; but as a means of making their product flow in the moſt neceſſary channel. The records of the times inform us, that the real expence of the year 1781, was 30 millions; and yet we were inferior at ſea, though 30 millions much exceeded the expence of both France and Spain. Such circumſtances created a ferment in the minds of men: Thoſe who loved and reſpected their country, were ſhocked at ſuch a profuſion of treaſure, that ſeemed to be ſwallowed up by every ſervice, but the ſingle one that could ſave us. They were anxious to diſcover the means of preventing it in future, and

and if poſſible, of forcing adminiſtration to the performance of ſo eſſential a duty. But being temperate as well as warm in this wiſh, they were deſirous of effecting it, not by petitions, remonſtrances, and an expreſſion of diſguſt, that would only prove us to be a divided, and conſequently a weakened people; but by ſome other means equally expreſſive of the inclination, but free from the very ſuſpicion of factious motives. When ſuch an outline was chalked out, how was it to be filled? It could be only done by a voluntary ſubſcription to build ſhips, raiſe men, or further ſome other branch of the naval ſervice. It was ſaid, let us preſent government with 40 or 50 ſail of the line; ſuch an addition will of itſelf be valuable, but as a univerſal expreſſion of the nation's feeling of the ſervice, in which they wiſh exertions to be made, it will be much more valuable, for it will force any adminiſtration to meaſures to ſatisfy this anxious deſire of a greater naval force. But it was ſaid, *we want men, not ſhips*, which ſhewed how little the plan was underſtood, for upon the real ſpirit of it, it would be a very fair anſwer to reply, *We are glad to hear it; if ſo, you ſhall want them ſtill more; let the people of England know, that inſtead of having ten ſhips in want of men, you have ſixty in that ſituation; and that while the*

combined

combined fleets are ſuperior to us, merely from ſending regiments and landmen, and a naval militia to ſea; any adminiſtration ſhall be hardy enough to complain of wanting men, and yet take no meaſures to get them.—This is coming to the very point we wiſh. Let ſuch a ſpectacle be exhibited, and we ſhall ſee our debaſed, unconſtitutional, vitiated, burthenſome, uſeleſs militia of 30 or 40,000 men ſent to ſea; we ſhall ſee regiments of infantry turned into marines: in a word, we ſhall ſee in England, the meaſures that have given our enemies a ſuperiority. That is a childiſh ignorance indeed, that ſuppoſes the fleets, which have oppoſed us to be manned with ſeamen; the trade of France and Spain has ſprung up like a muſhroom—has trebled itſelf for that to be the caſe; but the fact is well known, it is landmen that have given them their ſuperiority.

But, the plan would have ſtood on the ſame principle, had *men* been to be raiſed inſtead of ſhips built:—For if 50,000 men had been procured (ſuppoſing the poſſibility) and there were no ſhips to receive them, this would have produced the ſame ſpur to adminiſtration. The great principle was, to do ſomething that ſhould force adminiſtration to do a great deal more, and whether it was by ſhips or men, if that end

was

was anſwered, the deſign would neceſſarily be ſucceſsful.

I muſt, however, obſerve, that raiſing men was not practicable; and, if by great premiums you got them, the nation would not have been much the ſtronger, for they would have been procured only by deſertion; while every ſervice would have ſuffered, and the recruiting expence greatly raiſed. It is the legiſlature alone that can do this, either by converting the preſent militia into a naval one, or by a new naval militia. And this meaſure would probably have been upon the carpet by this time, had all the counties of England agreed to expreſs the ſentiment, which it is utterly impoſſible to ſuppoſe for one minute they do not feel: *the neceſſity of greatly ſtrengthening the navy.*

A. Y.

To the EDITOR.

LEST the expectation of a peace ſhould make ſome perſons conceive that the neceſſity of ſubſcribing to our royal navy is at an end; permit me to remind your readers, that the greateſt ſimilar exertions ever made in France were actually after the ſigning of the peace of Paris in 1762. The French had ſeen, through the courſe of the war, their ruin follow faſt on their inferiority at ſea, and felt the neceſſity of having a powerful marine ſo ſtrongly, that it was one generous feeling of all the higher ranks in the kingdom to augment their navy. A conſiderable part of that fleet which has been triumphant this war, and almoſt made the two kingdoms change ſituations, was built by thoſe ſubſcriptions in 1763, 1764, &c.

Now, Sir, why ſhould not the ſame foreſight prevail in this kingdom? We may reſt aſſured, a peace made with ſo great a navy in the hands of France cannot be very laſting. The period of it will ſee Breſt, Toulon, and

and Rochfort full of ſhipwrights; and we ſhall meet our enemy again on the ocean our formidable ſuperior, if we do not take the ſame ſteps to augment our own navy as he has done to increaſe his. This can only be by keeping every ſlip in the kingdom occupied in building ſhips, and making, in that manner, ſo good a uſe of a peace, as not to be apprehenſive of a war. Such a conduct, notwithſtanding the expence, will be the beſt economy. But miniſters will do no ſuch thing, if the voice of the nation is not loud and univerſal; they muſt make the ſubſcription general, if poſſible with the more alacrity on account of a peace, to convince our governors what is really the *determination of the people*.

A. Y.

To the EDITOR.

THE immenſe exertions made by France in ſubſcribing liberally to her navy, in the years 1761 and 1762, proved very clearly, that they conceived the approach of peace to be no reaſon againſt greatly increaſing their marine. The experience of this kingdom confirms the idea: the event of the preſent war, in relation to the navy, has been in one reſpect the exact counterpart of the wars of 1744 and 1756. We begin under almoſt every diſadvantage; we are ſlow in preparation, and ſeem to take all the leading ſteps with an entire want of vigour. The equipment of twenty ſail of the line is the buſineſs of a twelvemonth: Byng's fleet, that was to relieve Minorca, was ſo long in fitting out, and at laſt ſailed ſo weak, that as much blame was caſt on adminiſtration, as on the unhappy admiral. Admiral Byron's ſquadron exactly reſembled it; had it been in the Straits of Gibraltar before D'Eſtaing, half the unfortunate events of the war would have been prevented.

When

When a ſimilar weakneſs appears at the opening of every war, I am not apt to ſay at once that the miniſters are fools and knaves, but rather enquire whether the evil is not much deeper, and does not flow from a radical fault in the peace eſtabliſhment of our navy? Neither can I attribute it to a fancied vigour, which is thought to reſide in deſpotic governments; becauſe an act of an Engliſh parliament is as abſolute as the edict of a French king. The cauſe ſeems very obviouſly to flow from two points, or perhaps from only one—the *regiſter of ſeamen*, which in France gives the king in an inſtant the number of men he wants, if he calls for them at any time after the arrival of the American trade. This circumſtance, and the ſtate they lay up their ſhips in for ready epuipment, which probably flows from the other (as knowing they can have men, they take care ſhips ſhall be ready), is what gives them ſo manifeſt a ſuperiority at the beginning of every war.

But as the quarrel advances, the immenſe reſources with which this kingdom abounds, come ſlowly into play: our force is brought together gradually, but, when collected, nothing can ſtand before it. The laſt campaign is a memorable inſtance; great as the combined force of our enemies was, we may

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may be ſaid to have triumphed over the whole world. But it is ſaid we are ruined—we are undone—we MUST have peace. This folly has been the cauſe of peace being always of ſo ſhort a continuance: another campaign would ſee twenty millions expended *with effect:* the opening of a new war (in a few years, perhaps) will be the expenditure of fifty or ſixty millions, without any other effect, than preparing to ſpend twenty more, with the vigour of our preſent ſituation.

Peace, however, is at all times valuable; but it is a queſtion worth conſideration: how are we to employ it, ſo as to inſure its duration? Only by being always prepared for a naval war. We never yet have been attacked, but from our enemy thinking he could take advantage of our weakneſs.

Copy the meaſure that has made France uniformly ſucceſsful, at the opening of every war—the regiſter of ſeamen. Preſſing is more expenſive, and leſs efficient. Unite with this a naval militia. The eſtabliſhment of men in actual ſervice, is the great expenſe of peace; and that which has the leaſt effect: for, if 20,000 men are kept up, and a war breaks out, they will not, (after all the tenders, &c. are on their ſtations upon

upon the preſſing buſineſs) man ten ſail of the line. Thus your actual force will always be trifling, though you have an heavy eſtabliſhment. But ſuch an arrangement of your naval police as ſhall in an inſtant give you the command of 60,000 men, would be a poſitive and efficient force, though it ſlept till that inſtant in inactivity. This would of courſe demand the ſhips being kept in a ſtate of readineſs; and that they were ſo numerous as to leave the royal dock-yards, in a time of war, merely to the buſineſs of repairs. Perhaps it might be found proper to have the militia of ſix or ſeven counties always making a part of the eſtabliſhment, but changed ſo as the whole might be on ſhip-board in rotation.

That ſuch a plan as this ſhould be embraced, muſt be left to wiſer heads to decide; but unleſs the people at large prove unequivocally, that they are determined, that ſome new and effective meaſures ſhall be taken to ſecure the bleſſings of peace, which never yet were ſecured, but by readineſs for war, they may reſt aſſured that nothing will be done, but the old conduct purſued, to which we owe more than to any other circumſtance, a debt of 200 millions. The people muſt in ſome way or other make known their feelings: If there is a more temperate, legal

gal and conſtitutional method of declaring them, than by a univerſal and ſpirited ſubſcription, I wiſh it may be diſcovered and embraced.

A. Y.

To the EDITOR.

SIR,

IT is not without a great degree of ſurprize, that I find ſo many perſons urging in the public prints what they are pleaſed to call the diſtreſs, ruin and wretchedneſs of the people, as reaſons againſt their doing any thing by way of free ſubſcripton. The argument at firſt founded on certain ſpecies of real diſtreſs, ſeems to have created for itſelf a freſh foundation in its progreſs, by picturing evils which have no exiſtence, and foretelling calamity and ruin with a glow of colouring that looks rather like hope than apprehenſion. As this is a point of very conſiderable importance to be accurately

rately known, it may not be conceived very remote from the preſent queſtion to give it a ſhort examination.

That this kingdom ſuffers a conſiderable degree of diſtreſs, it would be madneſs to deny, but that its ſources are exhauſted, or that we have any reaſon for deſpair, are poſitions totally unfounded. The weight of the taxes laid on us for ſupporting the war is very heavy, but much more owing to the high value given to money, by withdrawing it from the uſual channels of circulation to the cheſts of dealers with the treaſury, than to the oppreſſions which reſults from thoſe taxes ſingly taken. This circumſtance has very much affected every branch of induſtry and every ſpecies of ſolid property, but there is great comfort in the knowledge that this part of our evil muſt in its nature be temporary: when once the treaſury dealings are at an end (and they ceaſe with the war) money will flow again in its uſual courſes; the money-jobbers buſineſs will ſink, and induſtry and trade reanimated, will return to their former proſperity, poſſibly (but that is matter of conjecture) with new vigour acquired with thoſe habits of prudence, frugality and caution, which bad times have taught the neceſſity of. That the great conſtitution of the community is ſound and unimpaired

there are many reaſons for believing: the late report from a Committee of the Houſe of Commons upon the debts, taxes and expenditure of the public, furniſhes us with ſome that are very unequivocal. The vague and floating opinions, and unſupported aſſertions of national ruin and diſtreſs, common in converſation, are among the follies of it, and deſerve little attention: the view and knowledge of any individual are too limited and imperfect, to be accepted as ſigns of what pervades a whole kingdom; local diſtreſs may ariſe from local cauſes, but when the nation at large is ſpoken of, the ſources of our information muſt be as univerſal as the queſtion. The product of taxes in the compariſon of one period with another affords very valuable information. They ſhew the extent of conſumption, and conſumption has never thriven in any country without the means of conſuming, which ariſe from income: it marks the ſtate of the people, and all the bleſſings that flow from animated induſtry. If great diſtreſs, ruin, or any cauſe of deſpair are to be found amongſt the people, we may previouſly determine that they do not conſume ſo many of the comforts, or luxuries of life, as they did at former periods; diſtreſs implies poverty, and poverty never invaded a people without

without greatly curtailing conſumption. Let us examine the report of the committee with theſe views. It takes in the eight years from Eaſter 1774 to Eaſter 1782; the members of it concluding that the year 1774 was unaffected by the American war, went no farther back, as it would ſhew how far that unhappy quarrel and the new taxes laid on in conſequence of it, had injured the product of the old ones. In this enquiry, objects of univerſal conſumption, and which concern the common people, deſerve our attention moſt; among theſe, no taxes have been ſuppoſed to bear ſo hard upon the poor as thoſe on malt, ſoap, canleather and ſalt.

	1775	1776	1777	1778	1779	1780	1781	1782
Soap 1712 and 1714	269,706	274,656	287,047	323,256	289,478	304,323	342,283	342,530
Candles 1711 and 1715	172,349	161,057	166,972	196,199	168,786	181,655	191,379	177,292
Hides 1711 and additional	204,887	199,820	191,646	222,436	193,695	202,889	204,429	203,378
Malt 1760 —	331,620	325,571	342,788	355,036	345,403	353,387	413,851	354,188
Ditto 1780 —	—	—	—	—	—	—	243,455	332,507
Hops 1715 —	44,713	133,650	38,684	122,112	40,386	156,228	49,415	112,653
Salt 1759 —	235,990	190,111	240,374	227,899	220,421	221,362	269,391	232,180

[84]

	£.
Total of all theſe in 1775, — —	1,259,265
Ditto 1782, excluſive of the additional Malt of 1780	1,422,221
Superiority of the latter — — — —	162,956

Hence

Hence we find that these articles, so important in the consumption of the lower classes, have been consumed all of them in as large a degree the last year, as that of 1774, and some of them in an increased proportion. The article of malt is extraordinary, the product of the tax of 1760 is very steady to the last year, for the apparent fall from 1781 to 1782 is not real, since the unusual height of 1781 was totally owing to the alarm at the new addition which set the malsters to work, thinking to malt time enough to escape that addition. The two taxes of 1782 taken together, exceed those of 1781, and prove that the consumption of this very general article is on the increase, in spite of the enormous burthens laid on it. How a distressed and ruined people could afford to continue, and even increase their comsumption, is much too difficult for me to conceive. I have heard so much of the declension of some of our manufactures, that these facts surprized me very much, as such decline might have lessened the product of these taxes considerably, and yet the symptom been dangerous only for the time, and gone off at a peace. But such is the innate vigour of a free people, that those burthens which would crush the subjects of a despotic monarch, seem but to animate the industry of this happy nation, the

foundations

foundations of whoſe proſperity are too deeply laid to be ſhook by any cauſes but thoſe that ſap that rock of liberty, on which the noble ſuperſtructure is erected.

There are few articles of exciſe which will inform us how far the war has ruined the higher ranks of people, the duty on coaches however will do it tolerably well.

	1775	1776	1777	1778	1779	1780	1781	1782
Coaches 1747 —	95,154	93,888	95,359	98,227	94,687	94,015	95,506	95,577
Additional 1776 —	—	—	—	13,844	23,870	22,575	22,534	22,376	22,801

Here is no decline, not even where it might have been expected from the additional tax. Let us in the next place examine ſome other articles of the various exciſe, which being laid upon a great variety of commodities and manufactures may be ſuppoſed to ſpeak the ſtate of all claſſes. The 9d. exciſe 1697—the two ſevenths—the £.3700 a week—the five ſevenths—the 3d. ditto of 1710—the 99 years exciſe—and the hereditary and temporary exciſe altogether produced

1775	1776	1777	1778	1779	1780	1781	1782
1,011,004	933,357	987,550	1,114,946	859,259	1,063,281	1,141,470	965,751

Here

Here are no other than the common variations of ſettled periods, for the ſmall deficiency of laſt year can be owing to nothing elſe, as no cauſe could operate a declenſion then, that did not affect 1781 compared with 1780, and 1780 with 1779, yet it roſe from 1779 to 1781. In theſe tranſcripts I have choſen the exciſe duties in preference to thoſe of cuſtoms, for very obvious reaſons: The cuſtoms are vaſtly more uncertain, and two columns in eight ſupplied by computation inſtead of fact, but the article of ſmuggling will always prevent our judging of conſumption by cuſtoms, as the duties riſe that practice increaſes, until it comes to its preſent daring and unheard of height, this entirely ſtrikes out the cuſtom-houſe entries of wines, brandies, ſpirits, tea, &c. from being proofs of what the interior conſumption is. It operates upon ſome articles of exciſe, but in no proportion to what it does on the cuſtoms. However with all their uncertainty and the decline which ſmuggling neceſſarily cauſes in ſome articles, yet there are branches in which national ruin ought to be felt, that have not fallen at all, thus the £.25 per ton on French wines of 1715 ſtands now juſt as it did in 1774, and yet is a luxury that would be ſpared ſooner than many others.

While

While I am conſidering Engliſh taxes as a means of judging of the proſperity or declenſion of this country, I cannot totally omit thoſe laid on to pay the intereſt of the loans from 1775 to 1781; it is indeed very delicate ground, for there are ſo many men who have reprobated them as the worſt ever known in England, that ſaying any thing in their defence may be thought engaging in a party queſtion which would be equally diſagreeable to my feelings, and beyond the reach of ſo retired a ſtation of life; but as the lowering theſe taxes beneath that degree of productiveneſs which they will probably arrive at, is degrading the national reſources rather than the credit of the miniſter who laid them on, my ſubject demands one or two obſervations on that part of the report of the ſame committee. Foreigners who know the ſums thoſe taxes were taken for, and who are informed that they fall ſhort of producing them muſt think very meanly of the conſumption and expenditure of this kingdom, if they look no further than that ſimple fact.

A miniſter who lays taxes to pay the intereſt of public loans, and conſequently calculates them at a certain ſum, muſt act upon one of theſe two principles; he muſt either look only at the immediate production of the tax to avoid deficiencies; or he muſt overlook the product while the tax is but making its

its way, and calculate it for a period when the collection is underſtood, difficulties overcome, and the aſſeſſments of it fairly paid.

There are many reaſons for thinking that the firſt plan, however it might prevent objections, would be very little for the benefit of the people. When taxation runs very high in a country, it is much better that it it ſhould bear lightly on an infinite number of points, than by being ſimplified to ſee it very heavy on a few. If a miniſter dreaded deficiencies, and calculated only to avoid them, he would fear all new experiments, and would ſtick cloſely and heavily to a few productive articles on which he could calculate ſecurely. So much a buſhel on malt, and ſo much additional to cuſtoms and exciſe will produce a certain ſum, but he who conſiders the conſequences of theſe lumping additions, which go equally to the worſt objects as well as the beſt, will eaſily agree that deficiencies had much better be ſeen on a variety of new taxes, than to find them thus avoided. A deficiency may be provided for, when it is found, but a productive tax raiſed to be an oppreſſive one, is not eaſily reduced.

If on the contrary a miniſter is not greatly alarmed at his taxes falling ſhort, he will venture to deviſe new ones, and to multiply and vary the points of taxation, which is a real eaſe to the ſubject; and what is of equal

conſequence, he will burthen the people no more than neceſſary. Perhaps it is no paradox to ſay that a tax ought to be deficient the firſt, ſecond, and poſſibly the third year, ſince none (except the lumping additions) can produce ſo much while they are making their way, as they will when the collection is underſtood and the management eſtabliſhed: but if to avoid deficiencies the miniſter taxes ſo heavily as to produce his ſum at once, the product hereafter muſt conſequently be more than is wanted, which however pleaſant it may be to ſtateſmen, is not quite ſo palatable to thoſe who pay it. But there is another ſource of deficiency which has little to do with the productiveneſs of the tax, and that is, the intereſt of a loan commencing immediately, and the taxes that are to pay it not of ſix months—with the probable neceſſity in the enſuing ſeſſions for a new act to explain and enforce the old one, againſt the cunning of the people evading the burthen, and though ſuch explanation gives no increaſe, but only the means of levying, yet the intereſt of the loan is going on, a deficiency neceſſarily ariſes, and would ariſe though ſuch tax ſhould afterwards produce much more than it was taken for. Let us with theſe views examine the products of the taxes laid to pay the intereſt of the ſums borrowed for the preſent war.

1776.

1776.

		£.
Laid to pay the intereſt of the loan of 1776, coaches, cards, dice, and ſtamps produced	1776	36,459
	1777	90,689
	1778	85,415
	1779	86,463
	1780	87,708
	1781	88,840

1777.

Ditto ſtamps, glaſs, auctions and ſervants	1777	10,025
	1778	115,746
	1779	137,228
	1780	142,656
	1781	191,751

1778.

Ditto wine and houſes	1778	39,327
	1779	81,548
	1780	172,436
	1781	169,205

1779.

Ditto 5 per cent. cuſtoms and exciſe, poſthorſes and ſtamps	1779	177,807
	1780	379,348
	1781	428,844

1780.

Ditto tobacco, ſalt, ſpirits, malt, and 5 per cent. cuſt. and exciſe	1780	362,082
	1781	684,772

1781.

Tobacco, ſugar, 5 per cent. cuſt. and exciſe produced in ½ of a year	1781	242,365

The moſt curſory glance thrown over this catalogue will ſhew that it is very difficult to ſay where any deficiencies will be found. The taxes of 1776 ſeem to be ſtationary for the time of war, what they will produce in time of peace we know not. They were taken to pay an annual intereſt of £.64,500, and conſequently have produced much more.

Thoſe of 1777 can have no judgment whatever formed of them, they are in ſuch a ſtate of regular and unbroken increaſe. They were taken at £.225,000, what they will arrive at is more than any man can ſay, but in all probability they will exceed that ſum. This obſervation is not equally applicable to thoſe of 1778, but as only the two laſt years are productive, they are plainly yet unſettled, nor is the tax on houſe-rent by any means eſtabliſhed. They threaten however to be the only very deficient ones in the liſt, for they were taken for £.330,000. The taxes of 1779 and 1780 both appeared on the advance that no concluſions can be drawn from them, if they riſe in future as they they have hitherto done, they will much exceed the ſum of £.472,500 for thoſe of 1779, and £.697,500 for 1780—for which they were taken. The reſt are too lately laid on for any man to be able to pronounce exactly what they produce; includnig the Cuſtom-houſe diſcounts which produce

duce £.167,000 there is little doubt but they will exceed the ſum demanded.

		Taxes produced the laſt year.
Intereſt of the loan of 1776 —	£.64,500 —	£.88,840
Ditto 1777 — —	225,000 —	191,751
Ditto 1778 — —	330,000 —	169,205
Ditto 1779 — —	472,500 —	428,844
Ditto 1780 — —	697,500 —	684,772
	1,789,500	1,563,412
	1,563,412	
	226,088	

The tax of 1781 had not been levied a year, conſequently cannot come into this account. In general it may be obſerved, that if the whole increaſe in future (without looking to a period of peace) as thoſe of the three firſt years have done, this deficiency will more than be made good, even in time of war: of their future product on the return of peace, little doubt can be entertained.

That perſon upon the whole, whether he be an enemy abroad, or too anxiouſly apprehenſive a citizen at home, who from theſe taxes conceives that the reſources of this kingdom are exhauſted, ſeems to build his opinion upon too looſe a foundation; and to attempt in too early a period to draw concluſions, which can only fairly be deduced from a longer and more correct experience.

But it has been ſaid the argument proves too much, for if this repreſentation is juſt, then

then the nation inſtead of being impoveriſhed by the war, has improved in its circumſtances, or, at leaſt ſtands where it did. This is however a miſconception of an argument, but no objection to it; the *degree* of the wealth and income of the nation is quite out of the queſtion, for in a flouriſhing ſociety taxation is no more than taking a *portion* of private property for the ſupport of the ſtate, which portion muſt always be a ſmall one, or the ſociety could not be flouriſhing; and a ſmall proportion, of income in a few caſes, or of conſumption in more, will very rarely mark the groſs income or wealth. Will it be ſaid that a man conſuming as much French wine, or driving as many carriages in 1782 as he did in 1775, proves that he is as rich, richer or poorer than he was then? It proves neither. For a man of £.20,000 a year might have his income reduced half, or on the contrary it might be made £.30,000 a year, and yet thoſe articles of conſumption ſtand as exactly as they did. Look at a rich money-jobber in the city, who in a houſe of 12 feet ſquare, with one maid, has perhaps an hundred thouſand pounds in his pocket—or the poſſeſſor of a large eſtate, who living like a blackguard, ſeems born to receive, but without a faculty to ſpend a ſhilling; how can taxes in ſuch caſes mark income or wealth?

The

The truth is they bear ſo ſmall a proportion to the great maſs of both in a nation, that they can mark neither accurately. All therefore that they prove in the preſent inſtance is, that the actual conſumption of the people is not impaired. The wealth may be leſſened; or it may be increaſed for any thing that taxes can tell us. A very obvious caſe is to be ſtated in which partial wealth leſſens enormouſly, yet taxes remain the ſame: a man of a thouſand pounds a year ſpends his income now as he did ten years ago, and his quota to all old taxes remains as it was; but let him ſell his eſtate and he then finds that he has loſt £.10,000: the nation however has not loſt it, for he has *ſo much leſs* than at another period, becauſe the bankers and money-jobbers at London have *ſo much more*, which they can employ to better purpoſes than buying eſtates.

For theſe reaſons, the ſtate of facts which I have connected in relation to taxes, do not prove that the nation is richer, or as rich as in 1775, but it proves expreſſly that it is rich enough to pay theſe taxes, and to pay them without diſtreſs, becauſe diſtreſs infallibly leſſens conſumption, but we find that conſumption is not leſſened. So far therefore, are the facts or argument from proving too much in relation to the great maſs of national wealth, that they in reality prove nothing more

more than the point of conſumption. I may *conceive*, as I certainly do, that conſumption, generally taken, is an index of wealth, but this is no proof. Thoſe, however, who are ſo ready to cry out to our enemies, as well as to ourſelves, *the nation is ruined!—taxes have undone us!* &c. will probably find themſelves much further from a proof.

And now, Sir, permit me to draw one general concluſion from theſe documents. How can the national diſtreſs be urged as an irremediable objection againſt individuals promoting the naval ſervice by a voluntary ſubſcription, when it appears that this diſtreſs is more fancied than real—and more in apprehenſion than experience.

It is very eaſy for men to ſay, *We are ruined*, and then puſhing round the claret as briſkly as they did ſeven years ago, drink confuſion to a miniſtry. With as many courſes, as elegant a deſert, as many ſervants, and more equipages, they are ſo poor that a ſubſcription cannot thrive. Men may not like the meaſure and refuſe to acceed to it, but why tell our enemies what is ſo palpable an untruth, that they do not come into it becauſe the nation is ruined already by the burthen of taxes?

A. Y.

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